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ABSTRACT

This guide assists in planning, designing, and implementing activities that increase people's awareness of careers in special education. It encourages practicing special education professionals to promote special education careers at the local level. The guide provides strategies for organizing recruitment efforts. Tips for getting started include assessing the community, determining one's information needs, and recruiting in one's area of expertise. Presentations are described as an effective technique for informing audiences about career opportunities and motivating them to consider choosing a career working with special education students. Steps in preparing, presenting, and evaluating individual and panel presentations are listed. Steps in planning displays and face-to-face encounters are also discussed, and other activities are noted, such as developing public service announcements. Appendices provide handout samples on the field of special education, a sample presentation, suggestions for presenters, sample overheads, answers to typically asked questions, a presentation evaluation form, a sample display layout, and a resource list of 15 organizations. (JDD)

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Professional Action Series

Promoting Special Education Career Awareness

EC 301360

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education

Professional Action Series

Promoting Special Education Career Awareness

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to assist you and your colleagues with planning, designing, and implementing activities at the local level that increase people's awareness of careers in special education. The guide is based on several assumptions:

- Major efforts must be undertaken to recruit a wide array of individuals to pursue careers in special education and related services if the critical shortage of qualified professionals in the field is to be reduced.

- Career choices are often based on personal experiences relating to a particular career and from information gathered from professionals already in that field.

- Practicing special education providers are the best recruiters of future generations of professionals.

Over the past two decades, dramatic changes have occurred in federal legislation which entitle individuals with disabilities to early intervention, special education, and related services. According to the Department of Education's *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, nearly 4.7 million children from birth to 21-years of age are currently receiving these services and it is projected that the number of children will continue to grow over the next decade.

While the number of children needing special education and related services has grown, the number of qualified special education and related services professionals has not kept pace. The *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress* also reported that in school year 1988-89, there was a shortage of 30,000 teachers, 898 social workers, 699 occupational therapists, 636 physical therapists, 1,411 psychologists, and 740 counselors. Projections suggest that the shortages will continue to increase in the coming years.

It is not too late, nor is it beyond our means to avert this crisis. While a variety of strategies will be necessary, the involvement of practicing special education professionals in promoting careers working with special education students at the local level is an essential component. Because you are a member of the special

education profession you are in the unique position to help others to consider entering a career as a special educator or related services professional.

Promoting Special Education Career Awareness was developed to assist special education professionals recruit new professionals into the field. Activities are based on the assumption that recruitment at the local level is key to attracting dedicated and talented individuals into special education. Whether undertaken individually or as a group, recruitment efforts are enhanced when approached in a planned, systematic way. This guide provides several strategies that can be used to help you and your colleagues organize recruitment efforts. The activities that follow can be implemented as they are presented or modified to better meet your individual or group's needs. Please feel free to expand and adapt any of the information presented here.

Getting Started

Initiating recruitment efforts in a community will take some planning and organization. However, once you have followed a few basic steps, implementing the activities will be much easier. Here are some tips for getting started:

Assess the Community

Because each community is different, it will be important for you to identify the points of contact that will be most productive to your recruitment efforts. Contacts could include service organizations, schools, universities, career counseling services, mass media providers, local community clubs—anywhere individuals show an interest in working with special education students.

Assess Your Strengths

Not everyone will be good at every recruitment activity. Some individuals may enjoy giving public presentations while others are excellent at writing or responding to questions. It is important to select an activity that best fits your strengths. Start with those activities that you are most comfortable undertaking. Later, with experience, you may wish to try some of the other activities listed or develop new activities of your own.

Talk About Your Area of Expertise

Remember, you are not expected to be an expert in all of the special education and related services professions. Staying with what you know best will not only make you more comfortable, it will also give your activities more credibility.

Develop a Community Recruitment Strategy

Establish long-term goals and short-term objectives for your recruitment venture. Decide which activity(ies) you might undertake to best support your efforts.

Determine Your Information Needs

Your information needs may vary, depending on which activity(ies) you choose and which audience(s) you are trying to reach. For example, will you be talking to high school students just beginning to look at their career options or adults exploring mid-career change options? Some good resources, available through the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, can be found in Appendix A. They are:

- *Teaching Special Education,* a fact sheet from the Professions Clearinghouse, that briefly describes some of the options within the special education teaching professions, including specializing in different disability areas, focusing on specific age groups, and working in a variety of settings.

- *Careers in the Special Education and Related Services Professions* briefly describes a variety of career options in addition to teaching. The material also provides some suggestions for exploring what it is like to work with individuals with disabilities, before choosing a career path.

- *Volunteer! Find Out More About Careers in Special Education* provides some tips for finding opportunities that will give interested volunteers first hand experience working with individuals with disabilities.

Collect Feedback

Feedback from activity recipients should be gathered on an ongoing basis to help you evaluate the effectiveness of each activity. Maintain a list of individuals who were involved in the activities for later follow-up.

Presentations

Presentations are an effective technique for reaching both small and large groups of people interested in careers in special education and related services professions. The purpose of the presentation is to inform the audience about career opportunities and to motivate them to consider choosing a career working with students receiving special education. Presentations can be made either by one individual, such as a speech to a group, or by several individuals, as in a panel presentation. Presentations can be made at local schools, clubs, organizations, and libraries.

There are several steps that you will need to consider in implementing this activity. A description of each follows:

PUBLICIZE THE SERVICE

Make community groups and organizations aware of your availability as a speaker. Personally contact guidance counselors and administrators in local schools, counselors and career planning and placement personnel at colleges or universities, the local Chamber of Commerce, public libraries, Scout troops, and others. Local newspapers can also be contacted and encouraged to announce the service. Follow up all conversations in writing.

Sample Contact Log

Contact Name: _____
Contact Phone Number: _____
Date of Contact: _____

- Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of your call.
- Ask if now is a good time to talk. If not, arrange a time to call back. Return Call Date: _____

- Briefly describe your goal (to increase the number of individuals choosing careers in special education and related services professions).

- Explain the purpose of your call (an opportunity to make a presentation, promoting careers in special education and related services professions).

- Ask if there might be an opportunity to make a presentation (e.g., a large assembly, career day, meetings or clubs, etc.).

- If the answer is yes, find out about the interests of the audience and specifics of date and time (See "Organize Your Presentation" below). If the answer is no, ask the person to keep you in mind for future opportunities.

- Thank the person for his or her time.

KEEP A LOG OF PEOPLE CONTACTED (INCLUDE DATES)

If you haven't heard from an individual for a month or so, place a reminder call. Keep the call short and casual, but stress that you would appreciate being kept in mind for any speaking opportunities. A gentle reminder can be greatly appreciated since the people with whom contact is made are often quite busy. When making phone or face-to-face contacts, it is a good idea to keep a list of points that you want to cover in the conversation. If the contact is face-to-face, be sure to take a brochure with you and an information sheet/card with your name and phone number on it to leave with the person.

ORGANIZE YOUR PRESENTATION

When you are invited to make a presentation, there is some basic information that you will need to collect to help you tailor your presentation to the needs of the audience. The following information will also help you decide whether an individual or panel presentation is most appropriate:

- When and where you are to make the presentation.

- The amount of time allotted for the presentation.

- The audience size, who they are, their interests, and their level of knowledge about special education.

- The room size and set-up.

- The availability of audio-visual equipment.

PREPARING AN INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

Although each speaker has his or her own style of presenting, there are some basic points that should be covered in every presentation.

- Who you are and what you do.
- Why you chose a career working with special education students.
- Statistics and demographic information about future career opportunities.
- A general overview of the special education and related services professions.
- Information on where individuals can go for additional resources.
- Information on how individuals can begin planning for a career working with special education students.

A sample presentation and presentation outline are found in Appendix B. Feel free to use them as guides, however we recommend that you never read a presentation. The Professional Development Department of The Council for Exceptional Children has prepared a list of suggestions for presenters which has been included in Appendix C.

Try to use audio-visual materials such as overheads, slides, or videotapes to enliven your presentation. They must be of good quality and readable by **all** of the audience, not just those sitting in the first two rows. If slides are used, the photography should be clear and focused. Sample overheads and presentation resources are provided in Appendix D and reproducible handout materials can be found in Appendix A.

PREPARING A PANEL PRESENTATION

In selecting individuals to be part of your panel presentation, choose persons who feel comfortable speaking in front of an audience. They should be very positive about their experiences in special education and be willing to share their enthusiasm with others. Panel members could include:

- Special education professionals.
- Related services professionals.
- Students receiving special education.
- Parents of students receiving special education.

- Professionals responsible for recruitment activities in education settings.

The panel's composition should vary depending on the information needs of your audience. Regardless of its composition, there are several helpful hints for convening panels:

- Determine the number of panel members that can comfortably speak given your specific time constraints. To do so, allow no less than 10 minutes per panel member. Add an additional 10 minutes at the end for questions and 5 minutes for a presentation summary.

- Appoint one panel member as the "panel moderator" who will be responsible for keeping the panel on track, fielding questions, and summarizing the comments at the end of the discussion.

- Make sure each panel member understands his or her role.

- Review with the members the content of what will be covered.

- Establish time limits, and arrange a "nonverbal signal" that can be used when time has run out.

- Provide panel members with a list of the most commonly asked questions.

- When it is unclear what a group might ask, have the on-site contact person survey the audience in advance to collect any questions.

- Make a list of the questions that were asked. Keep these on file for future reference to aid in preparing for future presentations. Some general questions that are typically asked can be found in Appendix E.

PREPARING HANDOUTS

A flyer or handout sheets should be made available to all participants. The handouts in Appendix A can be used as they are or adapted to meet your audience's specific information needs. Information provided through handouts should include the following:

- The benefits of choosing a career in special education.

- A brief definition of special education and an overview of the students who are served.

- A list of the possible careers in special education and related services professions.

- Resources to contact for more information.

SELLING YOUR PRESENTATION

Once a contact has been made and a date set for your presentation, consider the following steps to guarantee that everything runs smoothly:

- Send a letter of confirmation to the person who you initially contacted to schedule the presentation.
- Provide a brief biographical sketch about yourself and any other presenters, as a resource for people who will be introducing you.
- Give the title and a brief synopsis of your presentation to be used for promotional purposes.
- Enclose a photograph of yourself and any other presenters, preferably action shot(s), to be used to publicize the presentation.
- List all your audio-visual requirements, time constraints, and any other special requirements you might have.
- Restate the expected number in attendance and ask that you be contacted should that number change significantly.
- Give the contact person any relevant telephone numbers in case there are problems.
- If there is public access to the meeting issue a press release about your presentation.
- Send a follow-up press release to the media in cases where the presentation was made to a closed group.

EVALUATING THE SESSION

Each presentation should be evaluated by the audience and the person who arranged for the presentation. A simple checklist can be given to the audience that asks them to rate the effectiveness of your presentation in informing them about careers in special education and related services professions. See Appendix F for a sample evaluation form. The information gathered from these evaluations will be valuable to you as you prepare future presentations.

FOLLOWING UP

Correspondence should be sent to the host group within a week of your presentation. It should contain the following:

- A thank-you note to the person(s) who provided the speaking opportunity.

- Feedback from the audience evaluations.
- A request that any public relations stories (e.g., a school newsletter story) featuring the presentation be forwarded to you.
- Directions to forward requests for additional information to the Professions Clearinghouse or to another resource appropriate to the information need.

Displays and Other Face-to-Face Encounters

School districts, colleges, and other groups often sponsor career fairs or receptions. At these events, booths and/or displays are set-up, and individuals representing different professions are on-hand to inform prospective candidates about career options. These events are excellent opportunities to recruit individuals into special education. Additionally, some public facilities, such as libraries, have "welcome" displays, or bulletin boards that describe a variety of resources available to their patrons. You and your colleagues can serve an important role in participating in these events and/or displays. The following is a series of steps to be considered when implementing this activity:

PLAN

Plan what the display/booth will look like. What is visually appealing in communicating interest in special education? (See Appendix G for display layout.) Possible visuals for use in a display or booth include:

- A banner that invites people to consider a career in special education.
- Photographs of special educators in action.
- Quotes from professionals testifying to the rewards of working with special education students.
- Brochures about special education career opportunities.
- A list of resources to contact for more information. (See Appendix H.)

PROTECT VISUALS

To keep materials in top condition:

- Mount the materials onto heavy tag board or foam display panels available at most office supply stores.
- Store the materials in large cardboard portfolios.

- Preserve smaller displays by laminating them.

ESTABLISH GUIDELINES

You or other professionals should be present to talk with people about careers in special education. Although formal speeches are not typically given in these situations, read through the previous section on making presentations and become familiar with the information that is contained in the appendices. Use this information as background when talking with prospective candidates. Some general tips for individuals hosting booths are:

- Stand alert and look pleasant, even when not engaged in conversation.
- Smile and greet people as they pass by—don't wait for them to initiate contact.
- When people stop at the booth, ask their names and inquire about their interests.
- Introduce yourself and any other professionals who are staffing the booth.
- Be prepared to tell about your career as a special educator.
- Stress the benefits of working with special education students.
- Ask people if they have any questions. If you cannot answer a question, write it down and tell the person that they will be contacted at a later time.
- Make sure people leave with information on how they can get future questions answered.
- If the person is very interested in pursuing a career in special education obtain information about them and follow-up with a personal contact and/or provide information on how to contact the Professions Clearinghouse.
- Use a booth/display sign-up sheet to make follow-up contacts. Provide these names to CEC chapters or other appropriate groups so they can be invited to special education related meetings, activities, and opportunities.

PLAN FOR DISPLAYS WITHOUT HOSTS

When you are not available to be present at a display, provide a "tear-off" sheet that people can use to request additional information. These sheets can either be mailed to an address or deposited into a box that is part of the display. Followup these requests for information with a personal phone call or letter.

Other Activities

Not everyone is comfortable giving presentations or has the scheduling flexibility for making face-to-face contacts. There are a number of very effective activities that can be used in your recruitment efforts that do not require public speaking, but call for knowledge, skill, and creativity. They include:

CREATING VIDEO OR SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

"One picture is worth a thousand words." It's true! Seventy percent of the information that people absorb is communicated to them nonverbally. Video or slide presentations can be powerful vehicles for getting information to your audience.

DEVELOPING PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Many newspapers, radio, and television stations print or air Public Service Announcements (PSAs) free of charge to promote worthwhile activities. PSAs should be short and to the point, containing just who, what, where, and when information.

WRITING ARTICLES OR NEWS STORIES

Newspapers often welcome ideas for articles or stories featuring topics of local interest. Whether you write the story yourself or provide an interview to a staff reporter, the information you present will reach a wide, diverse audience. You may find the handouts in Appendix A useful as you prepare your story. Feel free to modify them as necessary.

Whatever activity(ies) you decide to pursue, the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education may have materials or know resources to help you. Write to the Professions Information Center, The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA, 22091-1589 or phone 703/264-9474. Best of luck in your recruitment efforts!

Appendix A

Handout Samples and Duplication Masters

TEACHING SPECIAL EDUCATION

If you are looking for a profession where you can make a difference and be in high demand, then...

We Invite You to Consider a Career in Special Education

A career as a special education teacher is a challenging one which offers you the opportunity to work closely with students, parents, colleagues, and people in the community to ensure that students with disabilities receive the unique education they need to become successful members of society.

The special education teaching profession offers many options. You can choose a career path that specializes in specific types of disabilities. You can focus on a specific age group, from infants through adults. You can also have the opportunity of working in many different settings in schools and in the community. Special education teachers may have their own classrooms or may work as resource teachers with students who receive their primary instruction from other teachers.

Special educators are able to concentrate on the uniqueness of each student and plan, develop, and deliver the specially designed instruction that each student needs in order to succeed. Class sizes of special educators are smaller than those of other teachers which enables students to receive more individual help and provides opportunities for close relationships to develop between student and teacher. In meeting the special needs of each student, the instructional process is often shared with other professionals such as general educators, physical and occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, and adapted physical educators.

Special educators are in great demand nationwide. If desired, there is the opportunity to move from one place to another within the profession. Special educator preparation programs are available in over 1,100 colleges and universities. Many of these institutions of higher education have scholarships and fellowships available.

Regardless of age, background, or disability, all students need and deserve good, caring teachers who can individualize instruction to meet their needs. You could be the teacher who makes the difference in their lives.

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
Professions Information Center
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1589
703/264-9474

CAREERS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES PROFESSIONS

Special Education and Related Services Professions include a variety of professionals involved in providing specially designed instruction and related services to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. All of the professions offer challenges and variety; they also require originality and creativity. Special education and related services professionals design or modify programs that help children and youth with disabilities learn and develop in their own way and at their own pace. The goal of special education is to provide students with disabilities the most appropriate educational environment, instruction, and related services to help them achieve their potential. One of the exciting challenges facing special education and related services professionals is to uncover and nurture the hidden talents of students with disabilities. Each of the following professions tries to meet these challenges.

- *Special Education Teachers* design instruction, materials, and goals to match the learning styles, strengths, and needs of each student. They ensure that students with disabilities receive the most appropriate instruction so that they can achieve their fullest potential.

  For information contact: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091-1589, 703/620-3660

- *School Psychologists* assess students to determine their learning and behavioral patterns. The results are used to plan individual programs for students with disabilities.

  For information contact: National Association of School Psychologists, 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910, 301/608-0500

- *Physical Therapists* use various movements to help people with certain physical limitations develop better posture and stronger muscles.

  For information contact: American Physical Therapy Association, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703/684-2782

- *Speech Pathologists or Language Specialists* evaluate speech disorders or lack of normal language development and provide therapy to help people overcome speech and language disorders.

  For information contact: American Speech Language Hearing Association, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852, 301/897-5700

- *School Counselors* work with parents and students to help ensure that the student's educational, vocational, and emotional needs are being met.

  For information contact: American Association for Counseling and Development, 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304, 703/823-9800

- *Occupational Therapists* employ the therapeutic use of self-care, work, and play activities and environmental adaptations to increase independent functions, enhance development and quality of life, and prevent disability.

  For information contact: American Occupational Therapy Association, 1383 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD, 20850, 301/948-9626

- *Adapted Physical Education Teachers* individualize and modify physical education activities to help students with disabilities develop physical fitness skills in a sports environment.

  For information contact: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589, 703/476-3400

What Are Some of the Benefits of a Career in the Special Education and Related Services Professions?

One big advantage is the growing demand for special education and related services professionals. This means that wherever these professionals live they will probably find positions available. And even though certification and licensing requirements differ in each state, they are likely to be able to continue their careers, no matter where or how many times they move.

Special education and related services professions generally offer opportunities to develop a close relationship with each student. Often paraprofessionals assist professionals to carry out their plans and free the professionals for valuable one-on-one time with the students.

These professionals also work as part of a team. They work with other professionals in the school and in the community to ensure that each student receives the services needed to do his or her best. These team efforts can lead to satisfying professional and social relationships.

How Can I Find Out Whether a Career in Special Education is Right for Me?

The easiest and best way to test your interest is through volunteer activities that will give you actual experience working with children or adults with disabilities. Ask the special education teachers in your school or community if you can serve as an aide or tutor, or volunteer to help at an organization office, recreation center, or camp that provides activities for individuals with disabilities.

Talk with people who are working in the various special education and related services professions to learn why they enjoy their jobs and what they see as the rewards.

If you would enjoy being a part of a growing profession that gives you many choices, opportunities, and challenges, one of the special education or related services professions may be the career for you!

If you would like further information, contact:

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
Professions Information Center
The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1589
703/294-9474; FAX 703/264-9494; TDD 703/264-9480

VOLUNTEER! FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CAREERS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

The easiest and best way to test your interest in special education careers is through volunteer activities that will give you actual experience working with children or adults with disabilities. After you identify an appropriate situation, begin to volunteer with people who are working in the various special education professions. Ask them why they enjoy their jobs and what they see as the rewards.

What Do Volunteers Do?

There are any number of meaningful volunteer opportunities that might be of interest to you. Depending upon your time availability and interests, you may choose to become involved in a one-time event, a short-term project or an on-going long-term commitment. Types of activities are nearly limitless. For example, you may choose to do any of the following:

1. Tutor or otherwise provide support services to students in a classroom or after school.

2. Socialize with and be a buddy to an individual with disabilities.

3. Provide informal assistance to students with disabilities in recreational or other community situations (e.g., waiting for a bus, shopping, or participating in local recreation or sporting activities).

Tips for Finding Volunteer Opportunities

1. Contact a special education teacher or administrator in the local school to find out about classroom, playground, or related opportunities for special education students.

2. Check with a Department of Special Education or employment bulletin board at a nearby college or university to see if they know of paid or volunteer opportunities assisting individuals with disabilities.

3. Call Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCA, YWCA or similar local organizations to see if they have programs through which you can help an individual with disabilities participate in the organization's activities.

4. There are an increasing number of disability-specific organizations that welcome volunteers and provide excellent opportunities for getting to know individuals with disabilities and careers in working with them. Special Olympics, Centers for Therapeutic Riding, and Best Buddies are examples of programs represented across the country. Contact the National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth (NICHCY) (1-800-999-5599) for information regarding such organizations in your area.

5. Contact the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education for information on local or state units of The Council for Exceptional Children where members will talk with you and help you identify appropriate volunteer experiences.

6. Most geographical areas have some sort of volunteer clearinghouse or placement bureau. They work like employment agencies and try to match the interests, skills, and talents of potential volunteers with community needs. Most such organizations can assist you in identifying meaningful ways to volunteer with individuals with disabilities while gaining information about career opportunities. Look in the yellow pages or contact your local United Way.

Appendix B

Sample Presentation Outline and Sample Presentation

SAMPLE PRESENTATION OUTLINE

I. Introduction

- Introduce yourself and give pertinent information concerning why you are here
- Thank your host group (and specific individuals in the group, if appropriate)
- Welcome the audience and reinforce their commitment as demonstrated by their attendance
- Briefly outline your presentation

II. What Is Special Education?

- Definition
- Who is served
- Number of children in special education

III. Why Consider a Career in the Special Education Professions?

- Benefits of working with special education students
- Supply/demand statistics
- Diversity of available opportunities
- Federal mandates

IV. Who Works with Special Education Students?

- Special and Regular Education Teachers
- Administrators
- School Psychologists
- Physical Therapists
- Speech, Language, and Hearing Specialists
- Rehabilitation Counselors
- Occupational Therapists
- Adapted Physical Education Teachers
- Social Workers

V. Preparation for a Career

- Certification/licensure
- Opportunities for involvement (e.g. volunteering)
- College requirements

VI. Concluding Remarks

- Summarize your presentation
- Reasons for choosing a career in special education
- Words of encouragement
- Thank them once again for their attention
- Offer follow-up help

SAMPLE PRESENTATION

Introduction

Good morning *(afternoon, evening)*, my name is *(your name)* and I'm here to talk to you today about the field of special education and the various professionals that work with special education students. Before I begin, I would like to thank *(contact's name)* of *(name of host group)* for *(his, her, their)* invitation to make this presentation. I would like to welcome you and, by virtue of your very attendance here at this time, thank you for your interest in special education. Today *(tonight, this morning, this afternoon)*, we will explore what special education is and who receives special education services. You will learn about potential careers in the field, current practices, and the demand for special education and related services professionals, now and for the next few years.

[Give brief outline of your own professional credentials]

What is special education?

I'm sure most of you have some understanding of what we mean when we say "special education," but let me give you my definition, so that we all have similar understandings. Special education is individually tailored instruction which is specially designed to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. These children have disabilities such as mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbances, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities. According to the U.S. Department of Education's *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, there are more than 4.5 million children and youth with various disabilities in the U.S. who need the services of special education professionals.

Why consider a career in one of the special education or related services professions?

The benefits of working with special education students are many. Watching children grow and reach their full potential is rewarding, especially when you have had a part in the process. In special education, where you work with children who have very unique and challenging needs, the rewards become even greater.

You may work with the same students for several years, bonding not only with them but with their families. Special education is individualized, allowing the necessary time for meeting the unique needs of each student. Also, you work in an interdisciplinary setting, with other professionals and general educators as part of a collaborative team to help students learn.

Currently, the demand for qualified special education professionals exceeds the available supply. Although there are over 300,000 special educators employed to

serve children with disabilities, the *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress* reports that there is still a dramatic shortage of over 30,000 special education teachers. While the supply varies by state and community, there are shortages of special educators nationwide.

In considering a career as a special education or related services professional, it is important to note the diversity of career opportunities available as well as the diversity of the students you will be working with. Students receiving special education can be found in regular education or self-contained classrooms, resource rooms, residential, hospital or homebound settings, detention centers and correctional facilities. While I work with children who have (_____) disabilities in a(n) (_____) setting, other professionals work with children with (_____) disabilities in (_____) settings.

[You may wish to show slides/videos of students with a variety of disabilities and/or in a variety of settings (see Appendix D for presentation resources)]

Since the Federal mandate for special education (Public Law 94-142) was enacted in 1975, the profession has grown to encompass services to individuals with disabilities from birth to 21. Special education and related services professionals work with all ages of children and youth from infants and toddlers to young adults.

Who works with special education students?

There are various professionals involved in providing services to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Among these professionals are special education administrators and teachers; school psychologists; physical and occupational therapists; speech, language and hearing specialists; school counselors; adapted physical education teachers; and social workers.

Special education and related services professionals design or modify programs that help children and youth with disabilities learn and develop in their own way and at their own pace. One of the exciting challenges facing these professionals is to uncover and nurture the hidden talents of students with disabilities.

[You may wish to show slides/video of different special education and related services professionals at work]

Preparation for a Career

Professional preparation programs for special education and related services professionals are available in numerous colleges and universities nationwide. However, certification and licensure requirements vary from state to state and profession to profession. All require a minimum of a bachelor's degree, while most require post-baccalaureate education.

Even before you enter a professional preparation program, there are a number of ways you can see special educators at work. Consider volunteering time in your local community's Special Olympics, attend career awareness days sponsored by local schools and public agencies, or devote time as an aide in a special education program in a local school. These are excellent ways to gain first-hand experience of the work of special education professionals and the students they serve before making a formal commitment.

Concluding Remarks

Today I have told you a little bit about special education, and the professionals who work with special education students. I have asked you to consider a career as a special education professional and I have given you some idea of how to prepare for a career working with special education students.

Choosing a career in special education is an important step. The rewards are as varied as the needs of the students with whom we work. Students may "make your day" with a smile where there was none before, a remembered spelling word or math fact, a literal step in the right direction, or an application of a hard-won concept. Are these outcomes any different from what is expected of any child? Not really. The differences lie in the work that you, your students, and their families know had to be done to get there. The additional effort is what puts the "special" in special education.

Thank you for coming today (*tonight, this morning, afternoon*). Together we have taken a brief walk through the field of special education and you have learned how special educators help children with disabilities blossom and reach their full potential. I would not have taken you on this journey if I did not truly believe that the rewards of pursuing a career in special education far outweigh any obstacles you might find along the way. There are a lot of resources out there to help you and if you are interested in finding out more, I will be delighted to be your guide. I wish you the best of luck in whatever decision you make.

I also have a brief evaluation form that I would like to have each of you complete before you leave. The information will be very important to me as I plan future presentations so please take a few minutes to fill it out. Your honest appraisal will be greatly appreciated.

Appendix C

Suggestions for Presenters

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTERS

(Prepared by the CEC Professional Development Department)

FORMAT

Make it simple	For your audience: • Say what your are going to say. • Say it. • Say what you have said.
Memory capacity	Present no more than seven concepts during the presentation; Four to five concepts would be even better.
Visuals/Graphics	• Use graphics and visuals frequently; let visuals guide the message. • Use transition statements between visuals. • Use a title to introduce yourself and your presentation.
Organize your thoughts	Draft your summary first, work back from that point. Lay out a story board to help ensure continuity and completeness of thought and information.
Practice makes perfect	Practice, polish, and refine your presentation.

DELIVERY

Never, never...	...read your notes for a presentation.
Make visuals legible	There is a limit to the amount of information any one visual can carry. For a room 25' long, letters on the screen should be 1" high; for 48', 2" high, etc.
Project yourself	Convey authority, expertise, and credible sources in the material presented.
You are in control	Keep in control of the presentation. Move forward to capture attention; don't stand in one place.
Avoid monotony	Vary your "speaking" voice. Provide equal presenter/media emphasis.
"Subtotal" your thoughts	Use transition statements with brief summaries of points just made. State conclusions specifically.

EVALUATION

Elicit feedback	Prepare a short evaluation form to be filled out by your audience after each presentation. Use their comments to assist you in preparing for future presentations.
Self-evaluation	Ever wonder how others see you? Try videotaping yourself and evaluate your own performance.

Appendix D

Sample Overheads and Presentation Resources

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Specially Designed Instruction

To Meet the Unique Needs of Children with Disabilities

Conducted in:

- Classrooms
- Homes
- Hospitals
- Institutions
- Other settings

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

- Special and Regular Education Teachers and Administrators
- Physical Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech, Language, and Hearing Specialists
- School Counselors
- School Psychologists
- Social Workers
- Adapted Physical Education Teachers

WHY CONSIDER A CAREER IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

- Many Rewards
- Challenging Work
- Extended Relationship with Students and Their Families
- Team Setting
- Diverse Career Opportunities
- Personnel Shortages
- Diverse Students

PREPARATION FOR A CAREER

- Degree
- Certification
- Licensure

PRESENTATION RESOURCES

Special Education Videos

The Michigan CEC has produced a 15-minute video entitled, "*Consider an Exceptional Career.*" It features special education teachers and support staff with their students explaining what's special about special education. The primary target audience is junior-high and middle-school students, however, it is also good for adult audiences. Cost $25.00 (includes shipping and handling). Available from Ed Page, Michigan CEC, 11000 McClumpha Road, Plymouth, MI 48170.

"*Reach for the Power—Teach*" is the title of a 30-second public service announcement, produced by the nonprofit group, Recruiting New Teachers. Cost $10.00 (includes shipping and handling). Available from the National Clearinghouse on Professions in Special Education, Information Center, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.

Related Services Videos

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has produced a 12-minute video entitled, "*Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology: Careers That Make a Difference.*" This production explores the kinds of disorders speech-language pathologists and audiologists treat and shows these professionals at work. Cost $35.00 (plus $4.48 for shipping and handling). Available from ASHA, Publication Sales, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852.

The American Occupational Therapy Association distributes a 13-minute video entitled, "*Commitment to Caring,*" which describes the broad spectrum of roles occupational therapists have in clinical and educational settings. Cost $7.00. Available from AOTA, 1383 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850.

Appendix E

Typically-Asked Questions

TYPICALLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

What is special education?

Special education is the provision of specially designed, individualized instruction to meet the unique learning needs of students with disabilities.

What do special educators do?

They design instruction, materials, and goals to match the learning styles, strengths, and needs of each student. This is important to ensure that students with disabilities receive the most appropriate instruction so that they can achieve to their fullest potential.

What are special education students like?

Special education students are a varied group. They differ by ability, age, learning style and personality (just like all children). To qualify for special education services, a student must have a unique learning need that differs from other similarly aged students. This need is individually determined through an interdisciplinary assessment, and the special education to be provided is planned jointly by the child's parents, teachers, other school professionals, and the students themselves if they are able.

What are the various disabilities of students in special education?

The disabilities of students in special education vary widely. Some students have cognitive impairments such as mental retardation, which can range from mild to profound or specific learning disabilities, that are unrelated to intelligence, but can interfere with the student's ability to learn. Other students have physical impairments that require the use of wheel chairs or other assistive devices. Some students' disabilities are sensory, such as hearing and visual impairments. Some have chronic health problems or multiple disabilities.

Disabling Conditions	% of Special Education Students
Specific Learning Disabilities	48.5
Speech or Language Impairments	22.9
Mental Retardation	13.3
Serious Emotional Disturbance	9.0
Multiple Disabilities	2.1
Hearing Impairments	1.4
Orthopedic Impairments	1.1
Other Health Impairments	1.2
Visual Impairments	0.5

(Taken from the *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*)

Do children with the same disability have the same learning needs?

No. While there may be some similarities, children with disabilities vary greatly in their needs. This is the reason why special education is so individualized.

Do special education professionals only work with students with some type of disability?

No. Some special education professionals work with students who are gifted. These students have shown achievement and/or potential in areas such as intelligence, creativity, leadership, and art. Like students with disabilities, individualized instruction for students who are gifted is necessary to meet their unique learning needs.

How much are special education teachers paid?

Income levels vary according to the school district and geographic location. Salaries of special education teachers are generally consistent with those of regular teachers. According to the American Federation of Teachers "Survey & Analysis of Salary Trends 1991 Research Report," the national average salary for teachers during the 1990-91 school year was $32,880. The average salary range for those same teachers during 1990-91 was $22,363-$43,406.

(Provide salary figures for your state/district if available.)

How many jobs are available for special education teachers?

Vacancies vary from state to state and community to community. Currently, the demand for qualified special educators seriously exceeds the available supply. During the 1988-1989 school year, the *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress* reports that 300,503 special education teachers served 4,587,370 students with disabilities. But an additional 30,000 teachers were needed.

(Provide information about your state or district if it is available.)

What kind of preparation will I need to become a special educator?

Becoming a special educator requires professional education and specialized expertise. New special education teachers initially complete an undergraduate degree or a master's degree. The types of professional preparation programs offered in colleges and universities vary widely but generally lead to special education teacher certification in the state where the program is offered.

Who are the other professionals who work with special education students?

These are the professionals who work cooperatively with the special education teacher to provide the most appropriate programs for their students. They include school psychologists; physical therapists; speech, language, and hearing specialists; social workers; school counselors; occupational therapists; and adapted physical education teachers.

I am not able to attend college at this point in my life, but I would still like to work with individuals with disabilities. Are there jobs available for me?

Yes, most definitely! According to the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education, there are currently over 150,000 paraprofessionals working in a variety of settings across the country. These settings include early childhood programs, regular and special education classrooms, resource rooms, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities and residential settings. The demand for these paraprofessionals is great. During the 1988-1989 school year, the U.S. Department of Education reported in the *Thirteenth Annual Report to Congress* that there was a national shortage of 5,590 teachers aides to serve students with disabilities age 3-21. In addition, many paraprofessionals find that they are able to move into professional positions while working and going to college. Some even find that they are able to use their experience toward college credit.

I have never worked with a person who has a disability, how do I know I will like it?

The easiest and best way to test your interest is through volunteer activities that will give you actual experience working with children or adults with disabilities. If you are interested, I can help you find an experience that will be comfortable for you.

(You may wish to prepare a list of contacts in your community that could provide volunteer experiences.)

Appendix F

Presentation Evaluation

PRESENTATION EVALUATION

This evaluation is an important part of my presentation. Please take a few moments to complete this form to provide feedback which I will use to revise and improve future presentations. Thank you.

Circle One: 1 = excellent, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor

1. Before my presentation, how would you describe your understanding of the special education profession?

   1 2 3 4

2. Describe the quality of my audio/visual materials.

   1 2 3 4

3. Rate the organization of my presentation.

   1 2 3 4

4. How would you describe my willingness to answer questions?

   1 2 3 4

5. After my presentation, how would you describe your understanding of the special education profession?

   1 2 3 4

6. What is the likelihood that you will pursue a career in special education?

   1 2 3 4

(over)

Note: From *Promoting Special Education Career Awareness*, 1992, Reston, VA: National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education. The Council for Exceptional Children. Reprinted by permission.

Please Explain: _____

_____

_____

_____

Would you like more information about choosing a career in special education? If so, please complete the next few lines.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone: (O) _____ (H) _____

Appendix G

Sample Display Layout

DISPLAY LAYOUT

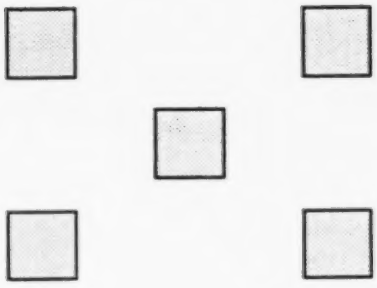
Display Banner

Consider a Career in Special Education

Professional Roles

- Administrators
- Resource Room Teachers
- Self-Contained Classroom Teachers
- Teacher Consultants
- Adapted Physical Education Teachers
- Related Services Providers

Pictures



Quotes

- Quotation from a Self-Contained Classroom Teacher
- Quotation from a Special Education Administrator
- Quotation from a Resource Room Teacher
- Quotation from a Student Receiving Special Education
- Quotation from an Adapted Physical Education Teacher
- Quotation from a Special Education Teacher Consultant
- Quotation from a Parent
- Quotation from a Related Services Provider

Table Top

Resource List

See Appendix H

Handouts

BROCHURE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION OR HANDOUTS

(See Appendix D)

Mailing List

Sign-up Sheet

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Mail Box

DEPOSIT MAIL REQUEST HERE

Appendix H

Resource List of Associations

RESOURCE LIST OF ASSOCIATIONS

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1589
703/476-3400

American Association For Counseling and Development
5999 Stevenson Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304
703/823-9800

American Occupational Therapy Association
1383 Piccard Drive
Rockville, MD 20850
301/948-9626

American Physical Therapy Association
1111 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/684-2782

American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA)
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301/897-5700

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1589
703/620-3660

CEC - Division of Early Childhood (DEC)
3 Church Circle, Box 194
Annapolis, MD 21401
301/269-6801

National Art Therapy Association
1220 Allanson Road
Mudelin, IL 60060
708/949-6064

National Association of Social Workers
750 First Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
202/408-8600

National Association for Music Therapy
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 930
Silver Spring, MD 20910 20003
301/589-3300

National Association of School Nurses
5700 Sanger Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22311
703/824-6950

National Association of School Psychologists
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301/608-0500

National Dance Therapy Association
2000 Century Plaza, Suite 108
Columbia, MD 21044
301/997-4040

National Therapeutic Recreation Society
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302
703/820-4940

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.
8719 Colesville Road Suite 310
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301/608-0050